

Rules for Speaking at Town Meeting

Who May Speak: Anyone who is recognized by the Moderator may speak. There is no guarantee you will be recognized.

Amherst residents who are not Town Meeting members can come early, get a visitor sticker at the check-in desk, and then ask Jim Pistrang, the Moderator, to be recognized. You may contact the Moderator in advance at 413-256-1737 (home), 413-237-5710 (cell), or by email at moderator@amherstma.gov. Visitors who wish to speak are normally asked to line up at the rear of the aisle farthest from the check-in table.

Non-residents who have a particular interest or information to share on a specific article can also speak if Town Meeting votes to allow them to speak. Non-residents may also contact the Moderator in advance.

How Town Meeting members can get called on: The Moderator must recognize you before you can make any remarks, motions, or amendments. Here's what you do:

- 1) Raise your hand and wait for the Moderator to either point at you or say your name. You may hold up a red tally card to let him know you want to speak against a motion, or a green one to speak for it.
- 2) When you are recognized, stand up and wait for a microphone to be handed to you or move to the front podium.
- 3) State your name and precinct *before* speaking.

How to obtain recognition if not a Town Meeting member:

- 1) Stand behind the front section at the top of the aisle in front of the Moderator and raise your hand.
- 2) When he recognizes you, he will ask if you are a registered Amherst voter. If "yes" you must state your name and precinct *before* speaking.
- 3) You then speak either from where you are standing or at the podium.
- 4) If you are not registered in Amherst, permission to speak is granted by vote of the Town Meeting. It is advisable to contact the Moderator about your wish to speak prior to Town Meeting.

No one may speak without recognition from the Moderator except to:

- second a motion
- call for division of a motion
- question the Moderator's ruling on a voice vote by saying "I doubt it"
- request a tally vote by calling out "Tally vote" and holding up your tally vote cards
- raise a point of order to seek clarification or point out a difficulty hearing or seeing

If you are recognized during the course of the debate, you have **only three minutes** to comment on an article or to advocate for or against it. If you move to amend a motion, you will have **five** minutes to speak your motion. Be aware that you must make your motion first. If you start speaking first you lose your chance to make the motion. You must provide four copies of your amended motion for the Moderator and other officials. A copier will be available.

- Try to time your remarks before you come. If you want more time, you must request it of the Moderator before you begin speaking. He will ask permission of the assembled members to grant an extension. Don't count on getting the extension! Have a shorter version ready.
- Your comments will be timed, and you will be able to see how much time you have remaining on the podium's timer. Make sure the microphone is adjusted so you can speak directly into it. If you have a visual presentation you will need to speak from the podium. Speak slowly and clearly. Remember you are on TV!